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S. Korean Ex-President Visits Reagan Wednesday

Brother Departs Seoul as Scandal Breaks

By Peter Maass
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SEOUL, March 19—Ex-president Chun Doo Hwan and his younger brother Chun Kyung Hwan are private citizens making overseas trips, but they are anything but ordinary tourists.

Chun Doo Hwan travels to Washington next week for a White House meeting with President Reagan, while Chun Kyung Hwan has suddenly left South Korea amid a mushrooming corruption scandal.

The trips appear to reflect the volatile jockeying under way as South Korea grapples with the legacy of military rule and alleged corruption during Chun Doo Hwan's eight-year rule.

Since handing over power to Roh Tae Woo last month, the ex-president has struggled behind the scenes to carve out an influential role for himself, according to a wide range of sources. But resistance has sprung up as some political elements, possibly including President Roh, try to turn the page on authoritarianism, while also exposing its excesses.

The first target of what may be an anti-Chun Doo Hwan movement appears to be his younger brother, Chun Kyung Hwan. He is now beset by a scandal involving the New Community Movement, an officially backed rural development organization he headed until recently.

Newspapers have published stories based on leaked documents from the Board of Audit and Inspection that charge massive mismanagement and fraud under the younger Chun.

The charges include misappropriating the equivalent in South Korean currency of \$622,000, at the current exchange rate, from an overseas travel fund, spending more than \$1 million on refurbishing a ship that was never used, receiving government subsidies of nearly \$12 million over several years for publishing a farming newspaper, and illegally developing real estate near the port of Incheon.

The published accounts do not directly implicate Chun Kyung Hwan, but observers view him as the real target. He is certainly no stranger to controversy.

Almost from the moment Chun Doo Hwan came to power through a 1979 coup, Chun Kyung Hwan's political and financial fortunes soared. He left briefly in 1986 during a scandal that included allegations that he was linked to organized crime figures.

The precise reasons for Chun Kyung Hwan's quiet departure last night are not clear. But it is widely believed that he left to try to avoid possible indictment. This week the main opposition parties called for his arrest.

The opposition has criticized the government for allowing him to leave. "Mr. Chun Kyung Hwan exemplifies irregularities and corruption conducted by those with power during [Chun Doo Hwan's] Fifth Republic," said a spokesman for the

Reunification Democratic Party, the main opposition group.

Meanwhile, ex-president Chun, in a bid to give the impression that he wants nothing swept under the carpet, has asked President Roh to investigate the charges. That may be difficult to do, and not only because the main target of investigation has left the country.

Some political experts suggest that it might be hard to probe alleged fraud at the rural movement without also looking into opposition charges that it was ex-president Chun who doled out favors to his brother—and to other relatives and friends.

Some political experts say the rural movement disclosures are part of an effort to clip the political wings of Chun Doo Hwan without attacking him directly. Since taking office, Roh and his allies in the party have walked a fine line between carrying on with the highly conservative tone of the ex-president's administration and offering a more democratic alternative.

So far, the conservative line has won out, although in a surprise move, Roh decided yesterday not to renominate several key Chun allies for National Assembly seats.

Since stepping down on Feb. 25, Chun Doo Hwan has maintained a low public profile, but he has lobbied actively behind the scenes for an influential role, according to a wide range of sources. Apparently this has set off a counter-reaction by elements in the ruling party who want President Roh to steer the country away from the authoritarian legacy of Chun Doo Hwan.

"Chun didn't really want to step down—obviously he wants to hold onto something," said a western diplomat.

A major political battle was played out during the past few weeks over the beefing up of a presidential advisory panel to be chaired by Chun Doo Hwan.

The initial proposal—which raised fears of creating a shadow government controlled by the ex-president—called for the Council of Elders to have its staff tripled, with the right to summon government officials and handle civil petitions. Under heavy criticism from the public, the plan was scaled back.

On Chun Doo Hwan's three-week U.S. trip, he is to meet with President Reagan on Wednesday and later with ex-presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and former secretary of state Henry Kissinger. It appears aimed at bolstering his stature back home.

Such an image-boosting visit with Reagan—apparently a factor in Chun Doo Hwan's decision to hand over power to Roh—could help stem a potential loss of political allies in Seoul. But despite his efforts to maintain influence, the question may not be whether Chun Doo Hwan loses power, but when, many experts say.

"A lot of people will realize that their old loyalties are no good—that loyalty to him is loyalty to a has-been," said the West European diplomat.

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